



# CHALLENGES OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN NORTH EASTERN STATES

Dr. Tamanna Kaushal

Assistant Professor, Department of Education, SLBSRSV, New Delhi-16.

## ABSTRACT

Scientific knowledge and technological skills play a significant role in shaping the contemporary world scenario. These advancements are a consequence of higher education leading to the genesis of what is known as a Knowledge Society. Education is one of the most crucial indices of socio-economic development. In India, higher education is of vital importance to build knowledge-based society of the 21st Century. It is the quality of higher education that decides the quality of human resources of the country. The present study is aimed at analysis and to highlight the status of higher education institution of the North-East and the steps adopted by these institutes for quality improvement since this region's development is impeded by certain inherent difficulties. The result shows that the general infrastructural facilities are satisfactory, but considering the changing student needs, the facilities are inadequate. The Government has recognized the generation of local content as a priority sector for investment, infrastructure development and promotion.

**KEYWORDS:** Higher Education, Challenges, North East States.

## INTRODUCTION

Human capital is one of the most important assets of a country and a key determinant of a nation's economic performance. The strength of a nation is dependent on its intellectual and skillful citizens. Education is regarded as one that contributes to social, political and cultural and economic transformation of a country. The prosperity of any nation is intrinsically linked to its human resources. A quality human capital comes from a quality education process. A carefully designed and well planned education system is critical to developing such human capital. India, today, is considered as a talent pool of the world, having qualified and educated human resources in abundance. Economist observed that, on a global scale, wealth and prosperity have become more dependent on the access to knowledge than the access to natural resources." The importance of education in India was recognized by the founding fathers of the country and the subsequent governments, and as a result considerable importance has been given to literacy, school enrolment, institutions of higher education and technical education, over the decades ever since independence. India's aspirations to establish a knowledge society in the context of increasing globalization, is based on the assumption that higher and technical education essentially empowers people with the requisite competitive skills and knowledge. It has been realized that it is the quality of education that prepares one for all pursuits of life and in the absence of an acceptable level of quality, higher education becomes a mere formalism devoid of any purpose or substance. As a result, from around the turn of the century, increasing attention has also been paid to quality and excellence in higher education.

Higher Education (H.E.) today is one of the pillars of success for any Nation. India's higher education system is the world's third largest in terms of students, next to china and United States. The vision of higher education in India is to realize the country's human resources potential to its fullest with equity and inclusion, the nation has embarked upon initiating a number of development-linked strategies to promote higher education. As a result of which the higher education sector, in recent decades, has witnessed a tremendous growth in many aspects such as its institutional capacity, enrolment, teacher-student ratio, etc. The rapid expansion of the higher education system as a whole has brought several pertinent issues related to equity, efficiency, excellence and access to higher education in the country. The present study is aimed at analysis and to highlight the status of higher education institution of the North-East and the steps adopted by these institutes for quality improvement since this region's development is impeded by certain inherent difficulties. This research paper, therefore, purports to finding out the specific sets of challenges and opportunities which are evident in the North-East H.E. system. This paper also seeks to know how the level of engagement in the faculty members of North-East H.E. Institutions should be improved.

### Significance of Higher Education in the North-East India:

The pertinent issue here is whether the impact of this growth has been spread uniformly across the country and benefited all section of society in an unbiased or disparities do exist in terms of gender, caste, economics status and religious groups. In a country with enormous diversity, the North Eastern region comprising seven states viz. Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura, is an important geographical entity. This region's development is impeded by certain inherent difficulties such as inadequate infrastructure, adverse climatic conditions and mountainous landscape. The region's peace and social life is often disturbed by border clashes and ethnic tensions. However, the region is endowed with rich biodiversity and natural resources. The literacy

rate in many of these states is above the rest of the country. Skilled human resources to exploit the local resources, if developed, such as tea, timber, tourism, oil, coal and bio-resources, offer immense potential for the economic progress of the region. It is needless to mention that quality higher education is prerequisite for creation and development of skilled human resources. Quality higher education, thus especially in north eastern region will help to circumvent the natural resource constraints and creation of knowledge infrastructure towards self-empowerment of the people.

## OBJECTIVES

The objective of this paper is to identify various strengths as well as weaknesses of higher education in North East and to suggest viable solutions. The facilitators of higher education can take advantage of it in order to bring out academic reconstruction of North East aimed at student centric higher education development. Considering that development of North East is a national priority.

## METHODOLOGY

The study is based on secondary data collected from reputed articles of research journals, books, prominent sites relevant to higher education, magazines, etc. The study is all about to focus on higher educational scenario in the north east India.

### Challenges of Higher Education in North Eastern states

The quality of education depends on several intrinsic factors like curriculum, teaching learning, evaluation, infrastructure facilities, learning resources, managerial India and organizational efficiencies and innovative approach to cope with the emerging challenges. Similarly the growth and development of higher education depends upon a number of extraneous factors. For example the geographical factors, climatic factors, ethnic factors, demographic problems, transport and communication, socio-cultural and economic factors have great influence in the development of higher education. An understanding of these parameters is essential for evaluating the present educational scenario particularly in the north eastern region.

#### • Insufficient number of institutions

To cater to the requirement of higher education in the North Eastern part of India, there are enough institutions to meet the demand, resulting in mass exodus of students to places outside the region in their pursuit of the same. This often lands the students of the region with spurious operators and other dubious agencies them countless hardships.

#### • More investment required

The need of the hour in North eastern parts of India is to attract more and more investments from all concerned stakeholders for creating provisions that builds effective platform for Higher Education and Learning. Facilitators are required to rethink and restructure policy matters specific of Higher Education, which not only promotes Industry specific curriculum for studies but also is capable of carrying forward location specific need based research and development and extension activities

#### • Exploitation of natural resources

The N.E region specifically in India showcases its diverse cultural heritage and is also having abundance of natural resources and rich biodiversity, which to a large extent remains untapped scientifically, resulting in massive exploitation not only

of the natural resource and biodiversity but also of the local inhabitants /population by vested interests.

#### • Research and Development

This is due to lack of much location specific Research and Development works, which again can be attributed to the insufficiency in number of Higher Educational Centers. Many of which though exist, have failed to come up with works that's truly reflective of the region's natural wealth and in terms of its exploration, conservation and planned commercialization.

#### • Terrorism

One of the prime reasons cited for such under development is terrorism. It is now that all concerned looked into such issues with all dedication and truthfulness.

#### • Lack of employment generation avenues

The above reason is strong enough for investors to shy away, resulting in non existence of employment generation avenues; the insufficient of vocational training institute and low quality of existing vocational institutes in the region. H.E institute give more emphasis on career oriented vocational courses need to be supplemented to the regular BA/B.Com/B.Sc courses with B. Voc. Courses.

#### • Inadequate physical infrastructure

Quality education is possible when facilities, resources and technologies are upgraded with adequate funds. Most of the colleges are not accredited by NAAC. Those colleges which are accredited by NAAC get woefully lower grade due to such issues as low quality input, inadequate teacher-student ratio, poor communication, etc. As a result, prospective grants are also curtailed.

#### • Lack of teaching credibility

Quality of teaching depends upon the quality of teachers. Availability of adequate and qualified teacher is a prerequisite of quality education. Quality teachers prefer to work in better colleges/universities offering better inputs, standard teacher-student ratio with effective communication, better physical and research facilities, etc. As such, highly qualified teachers are not interested to work in private colleges.

#### • Language Problem

The NE part of India has a preponderance of language, some of which are very well developed while others are not. Some states have over 300 dialects. There is a paucity, if not absence, of books in local languages for pursuing higher education.

### CONCLUSION

Although, there has been remarkable growth in the availability of educational institutions in the NES but Arunachal Pradesh and Assam are backward. Physical existence of institutions is important aspects to spread the higher education among the NES as per the requirement of area and population. Due to the paucity of higher educational institutes, students migrate to other cities. A report of Indian Chamber of Commerce (2010) analyzed that majority of the students migrate to the other states such as Delhi and Bangalore not only to pursue higher education like research but also a basic level of higher education like graduation because it lacks quality education. Secondly, technical and professional educational centers within the region provide outdated and irrelevant curriculum which also push the students to another area. In this direction Twelfth five years plan of the planning commission has also laid emphasis on quality of education in this region. Efforts of the government such as NES included in the category of special category states of India are accountable for the increased educational infrastructure in this region and has resultant that some of the NES are performing well than the national average. It reflects the plans and policies of government are playing the pivotal role for the enhancement of education sector. NES suffers from economic isolation. Absence of adequate institutional and physical infrastructure has slowed down the NER's development process.

### RECOMMENDATION

The foremost objective of the central and state government should take strong steps to overcome the infrastructural bottlenecks. Physical (library, laboratory, playground, computer centre) and Human infrastructure (Permanent teachers, female teachers, and professors) should be provided at higher education level. There should be focused at the rail-road network for the easy access to education institutes.

Government should take initiative to establish the universities and colleges according to the proportion of population and area context.

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